

Dementia-Friendly Bathrooms

Key Design Criteria



Bathroom Design for Dementia

Dementia has become a major health priority, with the number of people living with Dementia in Australia expected to triple by 2050. Yet understanding of the condition's best management practises, are still relatively new in clinical terms. As a result, creating a built environment that accommodates people with dementia is one of the greatest challenges faced today by the building and design industries.

It is recognised that a building and its environment can have a significant effect on a person with dementia, and can either support them or can accelerate their deterioration .

Caring for people with Dementia is a specialised area, and with the increasing prevalence, providers (residential and community) are being challenged to develop a level of speciality that they may or may not have the capacity to do without appropriate knowledge, support and vision.

For architects, designers and specifiers, the challenge lies in creating spaces that are safer and can cater for the inevitable rise in dementia patients. As one of the most consistently used and also potentially hazardous areas of any home or facility, the design of the bathroom is crucial to a successful dementia-friendly project.

Enware has over 14 years' experience creating specialist bathroom solutions for the dementia sector. With a wide range of dedicated bathroom products specifically designed for the aged care environment, twinned with a deep pool of knowledge in design, ergonomics and disability, Enware is well placed to service the growing dementia sector.

The experience Enware has gained from dementia and aged care projects allows for practical and grounded results that will make a positive difference to the quality of life of dementia patients.



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Key considerations for bathroom design

To provide the best possible quality of life for people with dementia, their families and carers, design considerations must be made to accommodate the deterioration of patients' functions, including key design issues such as colour, fixtures, fittings, furniture & furnishing and surfaces. Good design around these issues can help people with dementia and make looking after patients easier and more satisfying for carers .

As the level of dementia evolves over years, and the needs and the requirements of patients change, the bathroom setting needs to be flexible enough to accommodate these changing requirements. Variables that will influence the design requirements include:

- The type of dementia
- Symptoms or level of dementia they are showing
- Current mobility
- Current levels of independence
- Amount of care they require

A common need by architects when designing Aged Care bathroom en-suites, is to attain all the clients needs and wants, but to make the area as compact as possible.

Through collaboration with leading architectural firms, Enware has been able to reconfigure the traditional en-suite layout. It now has a smaller footprint and is more cost effective to attain, while allowing complete functionality by the resident as well as carers.

Adaptable, future-proof design

Enware's range of adjustable living solutions help to address changing needs, with a design system that can be adjusted and adapted as conditions and circumstances change.

The range features bathroom fixtures, such as grab rails, on track systems that can be adjusted horizontally and vertically depending on circumstances. The horizontal and vertical solutions give maximum flexibility and freedom in design, to assist in situations where:

- The user is not known beforehand
- There are various users
- The user alternates between independent and requiring assistance; or walking and sitting
- Circumstances change and conditions deteriorate

Enware's philosophy is to ensure that design and product solutions can cater for residents and carers not just today but into the future resulting in maximum quality of life.



Considerations must be made for not only the current requirements of a person with dementia, but also for the future

Colour contrast

For dementia patients, many changes occur which can affect vision and colour perception. This can result in a reduction in contrast perception ability, which can create a difficulty differentiating between subtle colour changes in the environment, for example the toilet and tiles .

Therefore it is important to use clear colour contrasts to help define important aspects of the environment. For dementia patients prominent colour contrast can be used to foreground objects and add clarity to the environment.

Enware provide a range of products, such as toilet seats, in bright vibrant colours that contrast with the bathroom walls and floors, to assist dementia patients in distinguishing between important elements of the environment.



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The flexibility to adapt

Enware is able to provide flexible options for en-suites and bathrooms, with bespoke solutions for each en-suite if necessary, attainable through the range of adaptable height bathroom systems. Enware's unique blend of products and expertise is unmatched in the building and design industry, and with the experience gained from thousands of successful aged care projects, working with Enware will help to ensure the best possible results.

In developing products for dementia patients, Enware takes into account the new way in which the patients process information of the built environment in which they live. This includes utilising the common and basic principles for assisting a person with dementia, which include orientation, the understanding of vertical and horizontal planes, and cognitive comprehension of how equipment like wash basins and toilets work.

A partnership for architects

Finding the balance between satisfying client needs while making the area as compact as possible has long been one of the biggest challenges in aged care design. Enware has addressed this issue through reconfiguring the traditional en-suite layout. With technologically advanced products and collaboration with leading interior designers and directors of nursing, Enware have been able to design an en-suite with a small footprint that is more cost effective whilst still allowing complete functionality by the resident and their carers.



Enware has... reconfigured the traditional en-suite layout



Enware Australia

Providing design feedback and education to the market is something that Enware does as part of its industry leadership profile, with knowledge on Dementia, obtained in direct collaboration with leading authorities on the subject such as the Dementia Centre, Hammond Care. Enware's position of expertise is built on the basis of the work Enware's been exposed to, in context to Dementia, which enables them to offer practical and grounded results that make a difference.

Enware's wide range of dedicated bathroom products for this particular piece of the Aged Care environment, twinned with a deep pool of knowledge in design, ergonomics and disability, make Enware extremely well placed to service everybody's needs & wants.

<http://www.enware.com.au/>

Dementia stats

- 342,800 – The number of Australians living with dementia
- 400,000 – Expected number of people living with dementia by 2025
- 900,000 – Expected number of people living with dementia by 2050
- 1 in 10 – People over the age of 65 live with dementia
- 4 in 10 People over the age of 85 live with dementia
- \$4.9 billion – Total health and aged care system expenditure on people with dementia in 2009-10
- \$83 billion – Expected health and aged care expenditure on people with dementia by 2060

Source: *Fight Alzheimer's Save Australia*⁴

Dementia care checklist

The Victorian Department of Health have produced a best practice design checklist for quality dementia care.

- ✓ Bedrooms with ensuites, toilet, basin and shower
- ✓ Toilets visible from beds
- ✓ Colour contrasted floors, walls and bench tops
- ✓ Colour contrasted basins and bench tops
- ✓ Colour contrasted toilet and floor
- ✓ Climate control in bathing areas
- ✓ Extra heat sources for extra comfort
- ✓ Mirrors over counters at suitable heights for people seated or standing
- ✓ Wall cabinet or shelves for personal items, located next to mirror
- ✓ Shower cubicles with shelf or fixture within easy reach
- ✓ Wall-mounted fixtures beside basins for easy access to soap
- ✓ Floor, wall and ceiling materials suitable for wet areas
- ✓ Appropriate materials for noise reduction (acoustic ceiling tiles)
- ✓ Fold-down handrails on both sides of toilet
- ✓ Portable shower seats with back support
- ✓ Showers with adjustable spray heads
- ✓ Shower fittings with detachable dry-break hose coupled to flexible hoses
- ✓ Height-adjustable shower attachment
- ✓ Wand spray unit that reaches into bathroom corners
- ✓ Towel rails near showers to prevent wetting during showers
- ✓ Baths for seated supine bathing
- ✓ Peach or coral painted walls that provide warmth and flatter skin tones

Source: *Department of Health, Victoria 2010*⁵



REFERENCES

¹ <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dementia/>

² <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dementia/changes/interior-design.htm>

³ <http://www.enablingenvironments.com.au/AdaptaHome/Colour/ColourPerceptionandContrast.aspx>

⁴ <https://sa.fightdementia.org.au/sites/default/files/NATIONAL/documents/Key-facts-and-statistics.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dementia/images/a2z/checklist03.pdf>

